



# CONTRACTIONS AS THE NEW TREND IN PR PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE: LINGUISTICS AND LINGUODIDACTICS

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the analysis of PR professional language variety as referred to teaching English to university undergraduates. PR terminology encompasses various contracted forms, which contain structurally and semantically encoded information that refers to language economy in terms of heuristic approach to language. The analysis of the vocabulary in question brings the subject matter into the focus of interdisciplinary research in the field of humanitarian studies, with reference to its linguistic and linguodidactic aspects. Certain spheres dealing with PR communication are subject to the analysis and synthesis in terms of linguistics, political science, economic theory, philosophy, psychology, sociology, rhetoric, and cognitive science. To elaborate the methods of teaching L2 to PR undergraduates, it is necessary to carry out consistent analysis of all language levels representatives in their interaction. The analysis of PR terminology, especially abbreviations and acronyms, is carried out to facilitate the process of professionally oriented L2 teaching. The results application deal with practical issues of linguodidactics and language teaching methodology as referred to PR studies with respect to the content and structure of teaching process, material choice and exercise samples with abbreviated forms in different types of activities. The article provides examples of possible tasks aimed at developing students' communicative and general cultural competencies based on the work with the language material under consideration. The shift of PR procedures implementation into Web 3.0 is discussed in terms of LSP teaching, which concerns with appropriate Internet materials use and processes of adequate interpretation as well as contracted realizations creation, determined by students' abilities and their proficiency level.

**Keywords:** PR terminology, interdisciplinary, abbreviation in PR language, LSP, methodology, linguodidactics, teaching methods

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# РЕАЛИЗАЦИЯ СОКРАЩЕНИЙ КАК НОВАЯ ТЕНДЕНЦИЯ В ПРОФЕССИОНАЛЬНОМ ЯЗЫКЕ СВЯЗЕЙ С ОБЩЕСТВЕННОСТЬЮ: ЛИНГВИСТИЧЕСКИЕ И ЛИНГВОДИДАКТИЧЕСКИЕ АСПЕКТЫ

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**Аннотация.** Статья посвящена анализу языка связей сферы «Связи с общественностью» применительно к преподаванию английского языка как иностранного студентам вузов. Терминология связей с общественностью включает сокращённые языковые формы, отражающие процесс языковой экономии в терминах эвристического подхода. Анализ PR-лексики позволяет обратиться к области междисциплинарных исследований в гуманитарной сфере с учётом лингвистического и лингводидактического аспектов их изучения. Целый ряд областей, относящихся к сфере PR-коммуникации, подлежит анализу и синтезу с точки зрения лингвистики, политологии, экономической теории, философии, психологии, социологии, риторики, когнитивных наук. Разработка методики преподавания английского языка как иностранного магистрантам, обучающимся по программе «Связи с общественностью», основана на проведении последовательного анализа репрезентантов всех языковых уровней в их взаимодействии, в частности, лексического уровня, с особым вниманием к получившим распространение аббревиатурам и акронимам. Применение результатов исследования связано с практическими вопросами лингводидактики и методики преподавания языков в области связей с общественностью, в част-

ности, с вопросами содержания и структуры учебного процесса, выбора соответствующего материала и создания образцов заданий на разные виды деятельности с изучением сокращённых форм для осуществления профессионально ориентированного обучения языку специальности. В статье приводятся примеры возможных заданий, нацеленных на развитие у студентов коммуникативной и общекультурной компетенций. Смещение PR-деятельности в интернет-среду подлежит обсуждению с точки зрения надлежащего использования интернет-материалов в преподавании языка для специальных целей и в соответствии с уровнем подготовки студентов и их способностей.

**Ключевые слова:** терминология PR, междисциплинарность, аббревиация в языке связей с общественностью, язык для специальных целей, методология, лингводидактика, методика обучения

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## Introduction

Linguodidactics is a multifarious field of study that forwards the efficacy of L2 teaching. It is the methodological basis of theory and practice of LSP teaching. Linguodidactics is the scholarly discipline that can give answers to those two eternal questions, which for centuries have been posed by L2 teachers: what should be taught and how it should be taught. The primary concern is the material selected for the curriculum in terms of foreign language acquisition, and then the methods of L2 teaching used for professionally oriented undergraduates of different specialities. At present L2 teaching to PR undergraduates has become of particular importance due to the PR subject itself, which is an interdisciplinary field of study dealing with the shaping of public opinion and inducing the audience to certain activities. This phenomenon is of special importance for linguistics dealing with the structure and rules of a language as well as their implementation in speech. One of the most significant characteristics of the present day PR discourse is the use of contracted forms, or abbreviations, which are traditionally subdivided into four types: initialisms, acronyms, blendings and clippings [9]. The topicality of the problem under consideration is accounted for by the need for elaborating new approaches to language teaching in the context of new realia, new functional and heuristic requirements of the present-day reality.

## Literature review

As PR is a discipline that has recently become the subject of study of various disciplines, the research, besides linguodidactics, is closely connected with linguistics, political science, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and rhetoric. A great number of studies dealing with theory and practice of PR communication demonstrate its significance for modern society including the process of teaching LSP as a significant academic discipline in terms of theoretical and practical knowledge structuring [15], [17], as well as functional parameters [19].

Modern foreign and domestic PR studies differ in the variety of methods, the choice of the material for the studied period, and empirical analysis. The attention of scholars is concentrated not only on PR discourse features investigation [2], but on teaching methods and curricula structure as well, based on the thoroughly elaborated linguodidactic theory [18]. As a result of the intensive development of theoretical and methodological research of the PR discourse, a number of new directions have emerged to highlight certain aspects of PR communication [10].

Linguodidactics as a multifold discipline deals with basic approaches to the language teaching process with special attention to language considered as the means of cognition and learning, on the one hand,

and a particular object of study, on the other. Experts in the field pay special attention to the complex nature of modern pedagogical and methodological scientific domain, which includes linguodidactics as the theoretical methodological basis of teaching and learning process [11]. L2 teaching to PR undergraduates is examined from the point of view of the complexity and integrity of both PR as the field of human activity where L2 is used at the LSP level, and of linguodidactics as the methodological basis of the analytical approach to the research being conducted. In the course of the discussion of the problem under analysis current trends and approaches within linguistic and linguodidactic spheres are taken into consideration [12], [23].

## 1. Material and Methodology

The problem of the appropriate linguistic didactic and teaching materials for future PR-specialists creation is still under consideration, as Public Relations is an extremely sensitive area in terms of dynamic changes that are taking place in the society and reflected in the field of human relations. Thus, the requirement of reliable and solid knowledge in the field of PR language, considering its dynamic and creative nature, is crucially important. It is precisely this circumstance that explains the need to develop basic principles and foundations for studying the language of the Public Relations, creating and using special dictionaries containing the units of language, which can be regarded as universal when creating PR messages, including the interactive sphere of the Internet. The language of PR being realized within its discursive sphere is strongly determined by such issues as power, politics, society and other vitally important phenomena connected with human activities and aimed at an individual's world-view formation. In this regard linguodidactics corresponds to educational linguistics [21], which is concerned not only with the issues of practical application of linguistic knowledge in the course of teaching but also with the way social and political goals are achieved via means of learning and using languages, which meets certain linguistic policy implementation requirements, as discourse is strongly determined by extralinguistic reality and represents itself as an integrative dynamic system [14], [16]. The integrative character of linguodidactics is manifested in its close connection with a number of areas of study, which played a key role in its formation as an area of knowledge within the framework of the modern scientific interdisciplinary paradigm. Language is used not only as a means of information transfer between cultures, but also as a means of identifying similarities and differences between different mentalities, as well as an instrument aimed at establishing contacts for successful communication, including professional circles and language varieties. In this regard, the issue of studying professionally oriented language of Public Relations is characterized by language representations of various abbreviations related to other areas of human activity and, respectively, undergoing certain semantic and functional changes, being elements of the new structural and conceptual system, that needs special research. To study the lexical specificity of the PR discourse it was necessary to use such methods as the method of philological analysis, the method of component analysis, the method of contextual analysis, the methods of analysis and synthesis, the method of comparative studies with regard to the peculiarities of the PR subject per se.

## 2. Discussion

### 2.1. PR terminology as the field of linguistic research

It is remarkable that today the relevance of Public Relations is undoubted. The growing importance of the field of PR and as well the growing global interest in its teaching provide for the thoughts of creating a global core curriculum and bring practitioners closer to the professional education [3], [4], [13]. The core of the professionally oriented language is terminology, which plays a crucial role in establishing the subject area of PR and serving all spheres of its professional discourse. PR terminology is currently in the state of development with certain dynamic processes still undergoing.

As PR is a discipline that emerged quite recently, for its terminological units, it has employed some already existed word-forms, but endowed them with new meanings in new professional contexts. Thus, for instance, at the lexical level the bulk of PR vocabulary is comprised of lexical units borrowed from other

spheres (journalism, advertising, marketing, psychology, etc.) closely connected and entwined with PR activities. PR terminology should be analyzed from the point of view of general terminological theory as well as from the point of view of particular PR characteristics as an independent field of activity. As it has already been mentioned, certain criteria can be applied to terminological units in terms of their linguistic status. Thus, the lexical units need to function in a certain professional discourse and be used to fulfill certain tasks. Such lexical units as 'brief', 'Press Release/News Release', 'Print Production', 'communicator' have entered the professional sphere of PR from other spheres of human activity [6].

## 2.2. Structural-semantic and functional features of abbreviation in PR discourse

The sphere under analysis also provides some illustrative examples of abbreviations, which include contractions with the combination of letters and figures, like 3Rs in marketing: Reach, Repetition and Relevance to ensure a successful marketing or a PR campaign; or the 3 Is: Information, Integrity and recently added Interactivity to describe the approach of PR strategy and availability of their message in the new age of technology. The third I as Interactivity has been introduced with the demand of the market for the consumers to communicate with an organization on a par.

There are cases when abbreviations and acronyms are decoded in a similar way, but may be realized in different disciplines and fields of activity [20] that refers to its linguocreative nature [22] and the ability to fulfill the identifying function within the social environment [1]. Such abbreviations and acronyms break the invisible frontiers of different spheres of professional activities to travel from one area to another without any changes either at external or internal levels. One abbreviation, for example, PPC, decoded as Pay Per Click is semantically adequate to the one functioning in such spheres as Advertising, Technology, and Marketing. One more abbreviation – CPC, meaning Cost Per Click, pertains to the areas of Advertising, Technology, Computing. The acronym ROI, signifying Return On Investment, sends its message throughout such areas as Technology, Journalism, Computing in which another acronym SEO, indicating Search Engine Optimization, widely functions on a par with the abbreviation CMS implying Content Management System. Such an abbreviation as LAN, denoting Local Area Network, lodges in the areas of Marketing, Technology and Journalism. Besides the mentioned areas of human activities, all the indicated abbreviations are the units of the PR sphere. They do not only carry their message through the mentioned verbalized areas but they are PR implicit instruments as well. Thus, we may come to the conclusion that the same abbreviated form can embrace several areas of occupation. It is necessary to emphasize that the phenomenon of representing different areas of human activities by the same abbreviation or acronym can be referred to language economy. The heuristic approach to language saves the human efforts, either physical or mental, in the process of information transmission. Table 1 below shows that some of the semantically transparent abbreviations may retain their original meaning and function in different spheres of human activity.

**Table 1.** Abbreviation common for different spheres

|     |                           |                                    |
|-----|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| LAN | Local Area Network        | Marketing, Technology, Journalism  |
| PPC | Pay Per Click             | Advertising, Technology, Marketing |
| CPC | Cost Per Click            | Advertising, Technology, Computing |
| ROI | Return On Investment      | Technology, Journalism, Computing  |
| CMS | Content Management System | Technology, Computing, Marketing   |

However, besides language economy dealing with the use of one contracted form in the multiple spheres of doings, another way of language economy is widely spread within the PR sphere and its related areas. There are numerous multi-valued abbreviations pertaining to language economy as well. Under such abbreviation are implied the ones with one external form containing different meanings. For example, one abbreviation such as FOFM contains four different meanings pertaining to different fields of activities. FOFM is deciphered as Fear of Food Measure; Friends of Four Marks; Friends of the Farmers Markets; Future Ocean Floor Mapping. All the meanings of the abbreviation FOFM belong to the PR area, at the same time being examples of the polysemantic nature of the abbreviation in question.



It should be mentioned that the use of the abbreviation in different contextual spheres refers to different semantic interpretations. Table 2 serves to illustrate the decoded meanings of the FOFM abbreviation.

**Table 2.** FOFM as a polysemantic abbreviation

|      |                                |
|------|--------------------------------|
| FOFM | Fear of Food Measure           |
| FOFM | Friends of Four Marks          |
| FOFM | Friends of the Farmers Markets |
| FOFM | Future Ocean Floor Mapping     |

Among the contracted forms under analysis abbreviations and acronyms are distinguished and differentiated according to certain traditional parameters. At the same time in a number of investigations the term “abbreviation” is used to cover the general current trend in linguistics, as far as English as the means of professional communication is concerned.

The next example of a polysemantic contracted form is the unit MOSA – see Table 3.

**Table 3.** The acronym MOSA and its basic semantic interpretations

|      |   |
|------|---|
| MOSA | Managed Operating System Alliance             |
| MOSA | Maine Office of Substance Abuse               |
| MOSA | Microsoft Online Subscription Agreement       |
| MOSA | Managed Operating System Alliance             |
| MOSA | Maine Office of Substance Abuse               |
| MOSA | Microsoft Online Subscription Agreement       |
| MOSA | Management and Operational Services Agreement |
| MOSA | Methods Of Soil Analysis                      |

Source: [www.abbreviations.com](http://www.abbreviations.com)

As it has become clear from the examples above, abbreviations and acronyms used in PR are noted for their diversity and can be deciphered in accordance with the corresponding context. Otherwise stated, one should possess particular knowledge in L2 in order to operate with the messages encoded via contracted forms, and this is one of the basic tasks in the fields of teaching methods and linguodidactics to elaborate certain approaches and strategies to acquire specific knowledge in the field of PR and its language in order to become proficient in the area and use the advantages of the linguistic phenomenon under consideration to the best advantage in terms of language and human resources optimization.

### **2.3. Practical issues of linguodidactics and language teaching methodology as referred to PR studies**

Linguodidactics is closely connected with practical issues that deal with L2 professionally oriented teaching process. Thus, let's turn to the prescriptive aspect of linguodidactic principles as referred to the process of their application to L2 teaching.

We proceed from the premise that for successful L2 teaching it is necessary to elaborate the systematic methodology concerned with the use of abbreviations and acronyms in the professional language. Besides theoretical part preceding the educational process, PR undergraduates are to master the practical skills of using the aforementioned units in both written and oral professional texts. As, psychologically, it is hard to retain more than six new abbreviations at a time, it is desirable that one should learn them in the course of practical activities. That is why interactive exercises are recommended to future PR specialists in order to foster the memorizing process. Herewith we offer a set of exercises to be used in L2 PR manual.

#### **Exercise 1**

In this exercise PR undergraduates can be offered a list of 20 abbreviations from the PR domain and acronyms to choose from to identify those they know. To prove their knowledge, they should decipher them and use them in the contexts of their own (first in writing and then in the oral form to exchange the information with fellow-students). The next task which is concerned with the exercise in question may

consist in the development of the ability to differentiate between abbreviations proper and acronyms, as used in modern English. To facilitate this task some preliminary information may be given to PR undergraduates regarding the differences between abbreviations and acronyms, existing in the language.

### **Exercise 2**

The next task contains a list of new abbreviations and acronyms so that the PR undergraduates can get to know them, to go back to Exercise 1 and define the new contracted units both in writing and orally, and then use them in a passage of their own. It is akin to exercises in intertextuality [5], as PR undergraduates are asked to demonstrate their previous knowledge of the contracted forms used in ESP texts. This task develops the undergraduates' memory and the ability to retain the decoded forms of the newly-learned abbreviations and acronyms.

### **Exercise 3**

The exercise is that of the matching kind. It consists of a two-part table. In one part of it six abbreviations are given, the other part of the table represents their decoded forms that are not given in the correct order but are scattered throughout the table. The task of the PR undergraduates is to match them and then use in the passage of their own. So far, this is the best way to memorize the material, when the students are actively searching, matching and inventing their own tiny texts with the new contracted forms.

### **Exercise 4**

It contains two parts as well. The first part contains a box filled with jumbled abbreviations and acronyms. The second part consists of fifteen sentences with the blanks. The task for the PR undergraduates is to fill in the blanks with the abbreviations and acronyms given in the box. A concise theoretical part dealing with the history of abbreviations and acronyms in the form of the text of the Unit should precede the exercises dealing with them.

### **Exercise 5**

This exercise deals with the PR undergraduates' ability and aptness to decipher and decode abbreviation and acronyms not in the list, but in different game-oriented tasks, like riddles or crosswords and other kinds of puzzles. We are aware of the fact that not every ESP PR instructor is able to do such a difficult and creative assignment. The best variant is when the team of the academicians, textbook authors, prepares them. The prompted playfulness motivates PR undergraduates to learn more effectively.

### **Exercise 6**

This exercise is aimed at the development of PR undergraduates' creativity. They are not given any ready-made abbreviations and acronyms by the instructor but they themselves should create rebuses, riddles and crosswords, dealing with decoding of the contracted forms used in PR professional discourse and present them in class. Here we deal with interactive assignments as the reaction of PR fellow students should be given during the presentation of the material. It can be regarded as the final stage of PR ESP contracted forms acquisition, as it is a double test to check the level of knowledge acquired concerning the new contracted forms. At home they revise the material with the ESP vocabulary and produce their creative work. Public speaking and presentations are given special prominence with special attention to self-efficacy [25]. The assignment to deduce the interpretation can be considered as a kind of a theatrical performance with the necessity to read mimics and gestures [24]. Here PR undergraduates can resort to Internal gamification applications (e.g. Learningapps etc.).

## **3. Result**

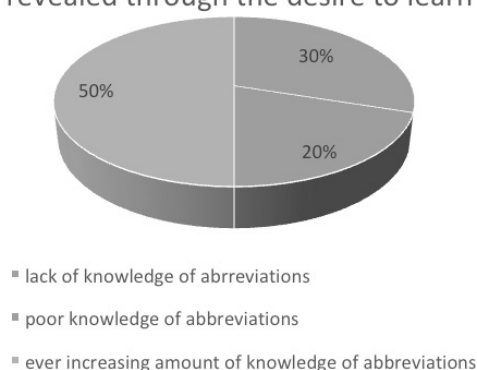
### **3.1. The study information**

The study was carried within a period of three weeks in February-March 2020 to find out how well PR undergraduates know PR abbreviations and acronyms. The study demonstrated that the level of half of the PR undergraduates (>50%) was quite low, as the issue of contracted forms in their professional language has long been neglected. However, with the course of training 30% of those undergraduates lacking the knowledge could catch up with the rest of the group, having improved their knowledge and attitude to contracted phrases. It has become clear that the existence of abbreviations and acronyms in the language stimulates the development of the language as such. As is known, L2 acquisition is much

determined by the favourable climate that exists in the class and the attitude of the PR undergraduates to their instructor. The remaining 20% of the PR undergraduates did not demonstrate enough efforts and desire to learn, which resulted in the minimum knowledge of PR contracted forms. At the initial stage 50% of the PR undergraduates expressed willingness to participate in different creative activities connected with interpretation and decoding of the suggested contracted forms of the professional PR language. This fact contributes to their increasing knowledge. The results of the survey are demonstrated in Picture 1.

**Picture 1.** Pie Chart Knowledge of the PR contracted forms, expressed by PR undergraduates

Initial knowledge of PR contracted forms, as revealed through the desire to learn



The ESP teaching in this domain includes both the teaching methodology and the knowledge of the related professional sphere per se. The cognitive approach attached to L2 ESP learning guarantees effective knowledge acquisition.

Contracted forms are also favored in L2 acquisition due to the advent of distance learning and online communication mode, as explained by the high demand determined by time and accessibility of this form of education. In this situation the contracted forms play a huge role as facilitators and accelerators of the communication process. The knowledge is acquired better when the interlocutors are both familiar with the ESP with all its nuances and peculiarities.

### 3.2. PR undergraduates' motivation

The motivation to learn ESP in the sphere of public relations as referred to contractions varies widely depending on the prior language proficiency and the climate in class in the PR undergraduates' future aspirations. Due to the motivation difference, the instructors should inspire PR undergraduates to learn the ESP vocabulary in general and contracted forms in particular, to be able to read and listen without obstacles the original PR texts and speeches. The instructors should teach them to appreciate the importance of ESP vocabulary learning. It is also the task of the instructor to arouse the interest in PR undergraduates how to decipher and interpret PR abbreviations and acronyms.

Certain factors can be an effective means of increasing PR undergraduates' motivation. It is by no means a universal category, as much depends on the undergraduates' personalities. Learning games have proved to be effective in stimulating knowledge acquisition. PR undergraduates should not only be offered the ready-made riddles, puzzles and crosswords dealing with ESP contracted forms, but PR undergraduates themselves should create and present their developments in class, so that peer tuition is favoured in the learning process among students in general and PR undergraduates in particular.

### 3.3. The shift of PR activities into Web 3.0

It has become a well-established fact that the influence of the Internet surroundings, including current models of communication, may cause various functional and semantic changes in the linguistic units



meaning and structure [8]. This aspect of electronic communication should be taken into account in the course of L2 professionally oriented learning and understanding of the abbreviation process within its scope.

Contracted forms of various types, abbreviations included, are extensively realized in professional languages and widely used to produce the new ones including new abbreviated formations and complexes. The well-known professional interaction schemes between B2B (Business to Business) and B2C (Business to Customers) – for the business sector and G2G (Government to Government) and G2C (Government to Customers) – for the sphere of state organizations – are supplemented, and then replaced by the new interaction schemes – C2C, where “C” stands for Consumers (or sometimes Customers), or Citizens, who become involved into communication processes, are used to express their opinions and make suggestions to the commercial companies. It is the ability to interact with the company that serves as an additional factor that motivates a potential target audience to turn to a particular information resource on the Internet. The example mentioned serves to illustrate the point that abbreviation becomes one of the most preferable ways of thought presentation both from the linguistic, cognitive and heuristic points of view.

Thus, the new reality that seeks new ways of language existence as well as its functioning for professional purposes, involves new approaches manifested in the spheres of linguodidactics and teaching methods. At the same time this situation deals with a number of problems as far as teaching languages, especially LSP, is concerned. It should be mentioned within these lines, that very much depends on the students' proficiency level as well as appropriate didactic materials suggested for learning, including prescriptions concerning not only abbreviated forms functional issues but advisability in terms of contracting and texting application in general, as, on the one hand, they are extensively used both in business and everyday life, and, on the other hand, there certainly exists the linguistic appropriateness parameter [7], the importance of which should be explained and discussed at a large scale. For example, in PR, while establishing contacts with the target audience, one should be firmly convinced that the target audience should not only be ready to properly decipher and interpret the optimized language forms that the PR specialist uses in speech, but should properly understand the purport of the message and be ready to share his or her views and support the opinions.

### Conclusion

Summing up, it should be emphasized that modern contracted form is a unique linguistic phenomenon that identifies the emergence and widespread of new trends in the language, based on the processes of reduction, truncation and encoding in terms of the usual language means potential use and revival, being on a par with other types of contracted forms realized in the course of human communication, especially due to the Internet environment. From the point of view of linguodidactics, abbreviation (and acronym) as the object of both theoretical and applied studies should be regarded as an integrated analytical technique based on the semantic correspondence between the whole and its constituents. Otherwise stated, the purely scientific and heuristic approaches to the phenomenon in question are closely connected with deep penetration into the domain of meaning, both the whole abbreviated complex and each of its parts, as well as the domain of function, analyzed in terms of the traditionally distinguished levels of linguistic analysis, including various types of context (linguistic, extralinguistic, cultural, cognitive), on which the educational approach to this phenomenon as referred to its professional aspect should be based.

The Public Relations area as the sphere of communication, concerning primarily the procedures of establishing contacts and promotion, is to a great extent determined by the efficient use of language and its structures that are most conducive to the development of these processes. Thus, teaching language professionally in the field refers to a thorough investigation of current language trends in their uniqueness in terms of optimization and linguistic and cultural appropriateness. The study of contracted forms that speed up and facilitate communication mechanisms seem to be of vital importance for professional language acquisition in the PR domain. At the same time when discussing the issue in terms of its implementation in the educational process one should bear in mind that very much depends on the particular methods elaboration and application as referred to teaching contracted forms decoding and

adequate interpretation procedures, taking into account their ability to manifest polysemantic properties being part of the professional language in question.

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